

Edith Cowan University
Research Online

ECU Publications 2011

1-1-2011

Seminal Exchanges: Exchanges that Change Our Life

Stephen Fanning
Edith Cowan University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ecuworks2011>

 Part of the [Marketing Commons](#)

This is an Author's Accepted Manuscript of: Fanning, S. (2011). Seminal exchanges: Exchanges that change our life. Paper presented at the 2011 Australian and New Zealand Marketing Academy Conference (ANZMAC), Perth Exhibition Centre, Perth, Western Australia. Available [here](#)
This Conference Proceeding is posted at Research Online.
<https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ecuworks2011/349>

Seminal exchanges: Exchanges that change our lives

Stephen Fanning, Edith Cowan University. s.fanning@ecu.edu.au

Keywords: seminal exchanges, seminal products, high involvement, migration.

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to revisit and advance a classic marketing concept; Copeland's (1923) classification of convenience, specialty and shopping exchanges. In doing so, product involvement, the three time zones of the buyer decision process and the three estimation, assessment and evaluation qualities, are also discussed. The findings are the result of a larger interpretive, qualitative study that explored a number of classic marketing concepts through the consumption experiences of a group of immigrant consumers. In this paper a new classification – seminal exchanges is proposed. Seminal exchanges have distinguishing features (1) they are high in total involvement; that means high in situational, response and enduring involvement (2) they place a marker in a person's life; a life before an exchange and a life after an exchange, and (3) they influence future consumption activities to a greater degree than convenience, shopping or specialty products.

Introduction

One of the most enduring concepts in marketing is Copeland's product classification concept. The proposition is that a consumer exchange can be classified as a convenience, shopping, or specialty exchange. Through this classification, marketers are better able to understand the product characteristics and, therefore, better market a product (Copeland, 1923). As one would expect this simple classification has received some attention over the years (including Holton, 1958; Luck, 1959; Bucklin, 1962; Wright, 2002) with much of the discussion relating to interpretation and definition rather than advancing the concept (Mason, 2005). However, some scholars, in an effort to provide a more consumer focus, have suggested extensions to the original three classifications (including, Holbrook and Howard, 1977; Enis & Roering, 1980; Murphy and Enis, 1986).

So it is perhaps surprising that after almost 90 years the concept remains true to the author's original proposition. According to Mason (2005) the American Marketing Association endorse the concept as the "theoretical basis for research into product categorization, retail distribution and marketing management" (p.317). In addition, researchers have employed Copeland's classification to define the scope of their research (e.g., Tan & Cadeaux, 2006). Moreover, the merit of Copeland's work can be demonstrated by its inclusion in a number of recent marketing textbooks (including Dann & Dann, 2004; Kotler & Armstrong, 2008; Lamb, Hair, & McDaniel, 2010) and a number of Lovelock's services marketing textbooks. Therefore, we could conclude that there is a general acceptance that Copeland's classification concept is a useful research and learning tool.

However, it is also generally accepted that Copeland's work does have limitations (Wright, 2002). Teaching scholars, who were interviewed for this paper, accept the limitations of Copeland's classification; however, they add that discussing the exceptions and why there are exceptions increases class participation and student learning. One teaching scholar stated that, although simple and broad, the concept has the possibility to sensitise students that product characteristics vary across the classifications and that different consumers may see the same product quite differently. Similarly, another teaching scholar stated that Copeland's classification helps provide a language and a foundation for more complex marketing

concepts. For example, product involvement, the three time zones of the buyer decision process (pre-purchase, product delivery and post-purchase) and the estimation, assessment, and evaluation qualities which influence each time zone.

The above teaching scholar comments confirm the assertions of Quester and Lim (2003) that it is the consumer who is involved with the product – not the product that is involved with the consumer. It is generally recognised that as an exchange moves from convenience to shopping, to specialty, consumer involvement with the product increases. According to Laaksonen (1999) involvement is a contentious concept that received a great deal of attention over many years. Zaichkowsky (1985) defined product involvement as “a person’s perceived relevance of an object based on inherent needs, values, and interests” (p.342). Laaksonen (1999) had a broader view and describes involvement as the psychological linkage between an object, issue, activity, and a person. Furthermore, product involvement, like Copeland’s classification varies according to the person, situation and product familiarity (Jacoby & Olson, 1974). Product involvement is influenced by the needs, goals and values of the consumer (Celsi & Olson, 1988) and may be influenced by external pressures; for example, “peer, social class and cultural values” (Rothschild, 1979, p.15). Therefore, an exchange that is low [or high] involvement to most consumers may not be to all consumers. A consumer’s involvement with a product may also vary due to specific circumstances, personal experience, and familiarity. Furthermore, given the three time zones of the buyer decision process, an exchange could be high involvement in the pre-purchase stage may become low involvement in the post-purchase stage, particularly with the passing of time.

The three time zones of the buyer decision process influence the type of involvement. Rothschild (1979; 1984), Arora (1982) and Bloch and Richins (1983) have identified three broad temporal involvement types – situational involvement, response involvement and enduring involvement. According to Rothschild (1979; 1984) situational involvement is the level of concern by an individual at a particular time, and is subject to prevailing conditions prior to the exchange. This view of situational involvement is consistent with the seminal works of Lewin (1935) and Belk (1974) who both argue that a decision maker’s needs and the conditions at the time of the exchange are inseparable. Response involvement is the degree of cognitive, affective, and behavioural effort required to satisfy the recognised need and thus relates to conducting the exchange. Finally, enduring involvement is the relationship between the decision and the effect on the person’s life. Rothschild (1979) and Arora (1982) put forward the view that *total involvement* with an exchange is the post-purchase evaluation of situational, response, and enduring involvement.

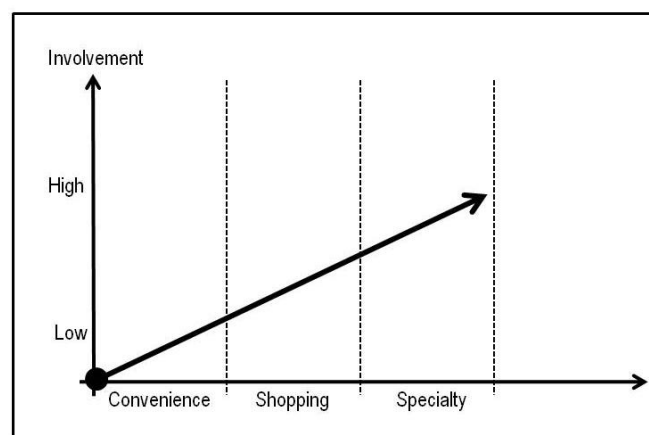


Figure 1: demonstrates how involvement increases relative to product category

Copeland's classification and total involvement are often described in terms of a continuum and whilst there is a recognisable anchor point at the convenience end of the continuum there is less clarity at the high involvement end of the continuum (see figure 1). Over the years a number of authors have looked at the linkage between different products and involvement (including Bettman, 1970; Rothschild, 1979; Zaichkowsky, 1985; Laurant & Kapferer, 1985; Mittal, 1985; Richins Bloch, & McQuarrie, 1992; Dholakia, 1997; Laroche, Bergon & Goutaland, 2003), however, today most products examined by the above scholars could only be classified as of low or medium involvement and few have enduring involvement. Furthermore, none are of high total involvement. One example of high total involvement is the migration from one country to another as this involves the migration from one set of consumption patterns to another and often from one language to another.

Methodology

The original study employed an interpretive, qualitative methodology. The interpretivist recognises the social world as a social construction and sets out to (1) record the reflections and behaviours of those being studied; (2) make sense of the reflections and behaviours; and, (3) interpret and present the information so others can make sense of the phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; 2003). The goal of the interpretivist is to understand the socially constructed world in an objective manner (Schwandt, 2003). An interpretive qualitative methodology (often simplified as a qualitative methodology) is appropriate when the researcher is required to explore and build a better understanding of the phenomenon (Belk, 1991), adopt an investigative stance to data, seek commonalities, elicit emergent themes and support perspectives that vary (Douglas, 1985; Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Furthermore, there is a general consensus that this methodology is appropriate when exploring culturally influenced consumption patterns (Geertz, 1975; Douglas, 1985; McCracken, 1990; Arnould & Wallendorf, 1994).

The group studied were Italian-Australians who had originally been engaged in self-sufficient farming and as such had to learn how to shop in Australia. The study was conducted in the homes of Italian-Australians with 53 participants. Each 'long interview' (McCracken, 1988) was tape recorded and then personally transcribed using Dragon Naturally Speaking software into a formatted Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. A row in the spreadsheet was devoted to each sentence. The left hand cell in the row identified the participant by code, this was followed by a cell that contained the participant narrative and in the three cells adjacent to the participants' narratives, key words were inserted. The key words were employed during the sorting process. Cells were colour coded during the analysis process to identify different themes. The Excel search and sort functions, by key words and colours, were employed to group data into themes. As themes began to emerge, the entire worksheet was copied and saved by its theme name; this permitted further analysis and easy movement between themes during dominant theme analysis. This process followed a similar process that was performed during the literature review and this enabled cross referencing of participant narratives with existing literature.

Findings

The participants in this study could easily classify exchanges as convenience, shopping, and specialty, however, they described how shortly after arriving in Australia simple purchases seemed complex. They attributed the initial higher involvement to language problems, product unfamiliarity, limited resources, and a lack of buying experience. More importantly, the participants also stated that when compared to a life changing investment such as migration, most exchanges could not be realistically classified as high involvement. Therefore, high involvement was a personal evaluation and is relative to all other investment

decisions. Participants also stated how the decision to migrate influenced; firstly, the need to sell most of their possessions and, secondly, their subsequent consumption activities. Moreover, migration influenced their subsequent consumption activities across a broad spectrum of convenience, shopping and specialty exchanges.

Participants often referred to their migratory decision as *starting a new life* or *building a new life in Australia*. Some referred to it as being reborn; one participant described this feeling as having two mothers – Italy, her *birth mother* and Australia, her *adopted mother*. “*You see when Italy could no longer feed me and I was hungry then my adopted mother said ‘I will look after you.’ And she has.*”

Clearly, some decisions create distinct sub-lives within a life – a life before a decision and a life after a decision. The participants referred to *home* in terms of their natal home (Italy) or their host home (Australia); often during the interviews participants then qualified which home they meant. They described themselves as having a hyphenated identity as Italian-Australians or Australian-Italians to indicate a bi-dimensional identity. When asked why did you emigrate? The participants carefully described the dire situation that existed in Italy in the years following the Second World War. One participant stated that “*there was not enough to eat and not enough land to cultivate so those that could migrated.*” Another participant stated “*We had to make room for the others.*” This highlights the high situational involvement of their decision. However, the preservation of their Italian identity and their maintenance of links with their natal communities [most making frequent return visits] indicates that unlike most exchanges migration could be classified as having high enduring involvement.

The high involvement nature of migration highlights the importance of the Darby and Karni’s (1970) search, experience, and credence qualities with each quality coinciding with a migratory time zone (pre-migration, migration, and post-migration). Nelson (1970) proposes that search qualities are those positive and negative qualities that can be estimated prior to purchase, whereas, experience qualities are positive and negative qualities that can only be assessed during and/or after an activity. Darby and Karni (1973) then added a third evaluation quality: credence qualities. Credence qualities are those positive and negative qualities that are difficult, costly, or impossible to evaluate in the post-purchase time zone. The participants in this study suggested that even after all this time they are unable to evaluate whether they made the correct decision.

There is a general view that involvement is more durable when the outcome is lasting (Gabbott & Hogg, 1999), when the decision relates to self identity (Richins & Bloch, 1986) and when a consumption activity relates to a person’s values (Arora, 1982). The participants stated that on some occasions they felt more Italian and on others more Australian. Generally they felt more Italian in Australia and more Australian in Italy. This bi-dimensional identity suggests ‘liminal’ stages. Turner (1969); proposed that liminality has three stages (1) rites of separation (pre-liminal), (2) rites of transition (liminal rites), and (3) rites of incorporation/aggregation (post-liminal rites). Traphagan (2000), building on the work of Turner (1969), presents the view that each liminal stage relates to a stage in migration. Seweryn (2006) suggests that the pre-liminal time zone is a period where the decision to migrate is made and preparations are carried out to separate from the natal community. The liminal time zone is where the migrant is in transit and is neither a member of the natal or the host community, during this stage of acculturation the migrant is in search of their identity and trying to reconcile their new identity. The final stage is the post-liminal stage where the migrant has acculturated and reconciled their bi-dimensional identity; their past, their present, and their future. However, Seweryn (2006) emphasises that not all migrants are able to complete the third stage, to fully acculturate, and remain in the liminal or semi-liminal stage

for the remainder of their lives. Traphagan (2000) agreed that the third stage might not be achieved; he noted that some migratory decisions are often made for the best interests of the extended family (making room for others) and consequently may place some migrants in a permanent liminal state and therefore increase credence qualities.

Conclusions

Whilst the anchor point for low-cost convenience products of low total involvement is clear what is less clear is the anchor point for higher involvement decisions. The decision to expend money to migrate from one country to another is seen as a highly involved decision which is likely to be life changing. Clearly, the migratory decision does not fall into a specialty decision category.

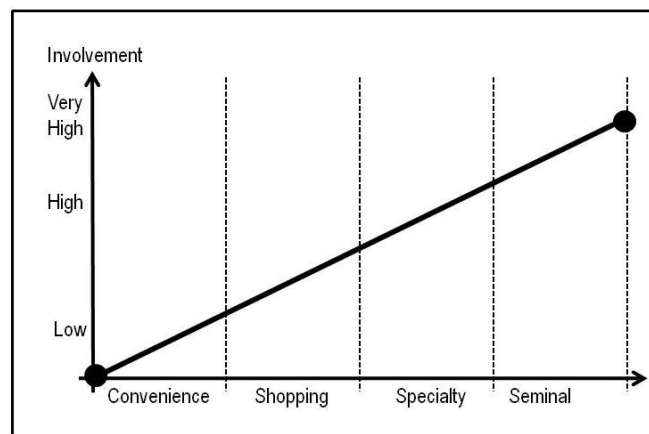


Figure 2: Seminal exchanges are higher in involvement than convenience, shopping, and specialty exchanges. This provides a missing anchor point to Copeland's classification.

Unable to find an existing marketing term for this type of exchange the term seminal exchange is proposed (see figure 2). 'Seminal' with its meaning of 'strongly influencing later developments' (Oxford English Dictionary) is preferred to life-changing as it connotes the sense of process and continuing.

Interestingly, the buyer decision process, involvement, search, experience, and credence qualities migration, and liminality can be grouped into one of three time zones. Therefore it can be concluded that seminal exchanges are also likely to have three time zones: a time before the exchange, the time of the exchange, and the time after the exchange. Seminal exchanges differ in that they place a marker in a person's life. Total involvement is high with seminal exchanges; high situational involvement, high response involvement and high enduring involvement. Seminal exchanges are more likely to influence other consumption activities.

To conclude, it is likely that there are other seminal decisions (e.g., university education) and further research is needed to explore this classification further. By identifying other seminal exchanges and understanding the marketing implications marketers will be better placed to serve both their customers and their organisations better.

References

- Arnould, E. J., & Wallendorf, M. (1994). Market-oriented ethnography: Interpretation building and marketing strategy formulation. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 31(4) 484-504.
- Arora, R. (1982). Validation of an S-O-R model for situation, enduring, and response components of involvement. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 19(4), 505-516.
- Belk, R. W. (1991). Possessions and the sense of past. In R.W. Belk (Ed.), *Highways and buyways: Naturalistic research from the consumer behavior odyssey* (pp. 114-130). Provo, UT: Association of Consumer Research.
- Bettman, J. R. (1970). Information processing models of consumer behavior. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 7(3), 370-376.
- Bloch, P.H., & Richins, M.L. (1983). A theoretical model for the study of product importance perceptions. *Journal of Marketing*, 47(3) 69-81.
- Bucklin, L.P. (1962). Retail strategy and the classification of consumer goods. *Journal of Marketing*, October, 50-55.
- Celsi, R.L., & Olson, J.C. (1988). The role of involvement in attention and comprehension processes. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15(Sept.), 210-224.
- Copeland, M.T. (1923). Relation of consumer buying habits to marketing methods. *Harvard Business Review*, 1(April), 282-289.
- Dann, S. & Dann, S. (2004). *Introduction to marketing*. Milton, Queensland: John Wiley & Sons.
- Denzin, N.K., & Lincoln, Y.S. (1994). Introduction: Entering the field of qualitative research. In N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln, (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 1-17). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Denzin, N.K., & Lincoln, Y.S. (2003). Introduction. In N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials* (2nd ed., pp. 1-45). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Dholakia, U.M. (1997). An investigation of the relationship between perceived risk and product involvement. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 24, 159-167.
- Douglas, J.D. (1985). *Creative interviewing*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.
- Enis, B.M. & Roering, K.J. (1980) Product Classification Taxonomies: Synthesis and Consumer Implications. In C.W. Lamb and P.M. Dunne (Eds.), *Theoretical Developments in Marketing*, (pp. 186–189). Chicago: American Marketing Association.
- Erlandson, D.A., Harris, E.L., Skipper, B.L., & Allen, S.D. (1993). *Doing naturalistic inquiry: A guide to methods*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
- Gabbott, M., & Hogg, G. (1999). Consumer involvement in services: A replication and extension. *Journal of Business Research*, 46, 159-166.
- Geertz, C. (1975). *The interpretation of cultures*. London: Hutchinson & Co.
- Jacoby, J., & Olson, J.C. (1974). An extended expectancy model of consumer comparison processes. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 1, 319-333.
- Holbrook, M. & Howard, J (1977). Frequently purchased non-durable goods and services. In R. Feber (Ed.), *Selected Aspects of Consumer Behaviour*, (pp. 189-222). Washington, DC: National Science Foundation.

- Holton, R.H. (1958). The Distinction Between Convenience Goods, Shopping Goods, and Specialty Goods. *Journal of Marketing*, 23, 53-56
- Kotler, K. & Armstrong G. (2008). *Principles of marketing*, (12th ed.). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson, Prentice Hall.
- Laaksonen, P. (1999). Involvement. In P. E. Earl and S. Kemp (Eds.), *The Elgar companion to consumer research and economic psychology* (pp. 341-347). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.
- Lamb, C.W., Hair, J.F., & McDaniel, C. (2010). *Marketing* (10th ed.). Mason, Ohio: South-Western Cengage.
- Laroche, M., Bergeron, J., & Goutaland, C. (2003). How intangibility affects perceived risk: The moderating role of knowledge. *The Journal of Services Marketing*, 17(2/3), 122-138.
- Laurent, G., & Kapferer, J. (1985). Measuring consumer involvement profiles. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 22,(2), 41-53.
- Lewin, K. (1935). *A dynamic theory of personality. Selected papers*. New York: Mc Graw-Hill.
- Luck, D. J., 1959. On the Nature of Specialty Goods. *Journal of Marketing*, 24(1), 61-64.
- Mason, R. (2005). Missing links: Product classification theory and the social characteristics of goods. *Marketing theory*, 5(3) 309–322.
- McCracken, G. (1988). *The long interview*. Beverley Hills: Sage Publications.
- McCracken, G. (1990). *Culture and Consumption*. Bloomington: Indiana Press.
- Miles, M.B., & Huberman, A.M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Mittal, B. (1989b). Measuring purchase-decision involvement. *Psychology & Marketing*, 6(2), 147-162.
- Murphy, P.E. & Enis, B.M. (1986). Classifying Products Strategically, *Journal of Marketing* 50 (July). 24–42.
- Quester, P.G., & Lim, A.L. (2003). Product involvement/brand loyalty: Is there a link? *The Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 12(1), 22-38.
- Richins, M. L., & Bloch, P. H. (1986). As the new wears off: The temporal context of product involvement. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 13(2), 280-285.
- Richins, M.L., Bloch, P.H., & McQuarrie, E.F. (1992). How enduring and situational involvement combine to create involvement responses. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 1(2), 143-153.
- Rothschild, M.L. (1979). Marketing communications in nonbusiness situations or why it is so hard to sell brotherhood like soap. *Journal of Marketing*, 43(2) 11-20.
- Rothschild, M.L. (1984). Perspectives on involvement: Current problems and future directions. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 11, 216-217.
- Schwandt, T.A. (2003). Three epistemological stances for qualitative inquiry: Interpretivism, hermeneutics, and social construction. In N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials*, (2nd ed., pp. 292-331). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Seweryn, O. (2006). Identity change as a consequences of the migration experience. In S. G Ellis & G. Hálfðanarson (Ed.), *Imagining frontiers, contesting identities* (pp. 21-43). Pisa: Pisa University Press.

Tan, L.P. & Cadeaux, J.M. (2006). Private Labels Beyond Convenience Consumer Goods: The Case of Organic Foods Retailing in Australia. In *ANZMAC 2006 Conference*, presented at ANZMAC 2006 Conference, Brisbane: 4 - 6 December 2006.

Traphagan, J.W. (2000). The liminal family: Return migration and intergenerational conflict in Japan. *The Journal of Anthropological Research*, 56, 365-385.

Turner, V.W. (1969). *The ritual process: structure and anti-structure*. Chicago: Aldine.

Wright, R.F. (2002), A review of the four prominent marketing school of thought, *Journal of Advertising History*, Special Issue (42) 4. Availability
<http://www.trial.warc.com/fulltext/HAT/76304.htm>

Zaichkowsky, J.L. (1985). Measuring the involvement construct. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 12(3), 341-352.